

UNMASKING

As part of Photoquai, the New World Visual Arts Biennale
the Canadian Cultural Centre presents

UNMASKING

Arthur Renwick, Adrian Stimson, Jeff Thomas

Curators : Martha Langford and Sherry Farrell Racette

September 23, 2009 - March 12, 2010
Opening September 22 at 6 PM



Jeff Thomas, *Father and Daughter in Toronto, Broadview Avenue* (2007), inkjet printing, 60.96 x 81.28 cm, courtesy: Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto

The Canadian Cultural Centre presents *UNMASKING: Arthur Renwick, Adrian Stimson, Jeff Thomas*, a Photoquai exhibition for the New World Visual Arts biennale organised by the quai Branly museum in Paris.

The photographic works of Arthur Renwick, Adrian Stimson, and Jeff Thomas are diverse, and to varying degrees, confrontational expressions of First Nations identity. *Unmasking* explores their individual strategies, which can be gentle, campy, or whimsical, while creating conversations between contemporary art, mass culture, and representations of the past.

Centre culturel canadien - Canadian Cultural Centre

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Access : Metro et RER : Invalides, Bus : 28, 49, 63, 69, 83, 93

Opening Hours : Free Admission

From Monday to Friday from 10 AM to 6 PM, Thursday until 7 PM.

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All three artists use staging, or posing, of the human subject, referring directly or obliquely to photographic documents, such as Edward S. Curtis's monumental and flawed *The North American Indian*, as well as stereotypical three-dimensional objects, ranging from sculptures to toys. All three also look to the built environment and the landscape for vestiges of First Nations representation and still active systems of belief. Every work in *Unmasking* carries signs of rupture in the historical account – signs that draw out specific histories and contemporary realities. Their mises-en-scène and performances are based on research and deep understanding of cultural traditions, while firmly implanted in the present. Their images powerfully state: “we are here now; recognize us; acknowledge us; deal with us”.

The exhibition has been organized by independent curators Martha Langford and Sherry Farrell Racette for the Canadian Cultural Centre, within the context of Photoquai 2009, the Musée du Quai Branly's biennale of contemporary photographic art – Renwick, Stimson, and Thomas are featured in the 2009 edition. *Unmasking* proposes an enriched experience of their fascinating artistic practices.

Arthur Renwick was born in Kitimat, British Columbia, and grew up in the Haisla Territory. His striking imagery refers to Aboriginal spiritual and cosmological traditions as dynamic forces present on the landscape and emanating from the body. Renwick studied in Vancouver and Montreal, and currently lives in Toronto. His work is included in major collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. In addition to his visual art practice, Renwick is a professional musician and a professor of visual art at the University of Guelph. His work is represented by Leo Kamen Gallery, Toronto.

Born in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, **Adrian Stimson** is a member of the Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation in southern Alberta. He is an interdisciplinary artist with a BFA with distinction from the Alberta College of Art & Design and MFA from the University of Saskatchewan. His work includes installation, painting, performance, video, and photography. Performances at Burning Man on the Black Rock Desert, Nevada, have created «Buffalo Boy,» a character parody of Buffalo Bill, *Buffalo Boy's: Wild West Peep Show*, as well as the Shaman Exterminator, an alter ego of Buffalo Boy, who seeks to explore the myths, falsehoods and realities of Shamanic being.

Jeff Thomas was born in Buffalo, New York, and currently lives in Ottawa. He is a member of the Onondaga (Six Nations Confederacy). His cultural practice involves archival research, curatorial projects, writing, lecturing, and advocacy. His photographic work raises issues of racial stereotyping and mutual misunderstanding through references to the histories, symbols, and actualities of urban-Indian experience. Jeff Thomas's work is represented in art gallery and museum collections in North America and Europe. In 2004, his solo exhibition *A Study of Indian-ness* toured extensively in Canada. His work is represented by Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto.

Martha Langford is an associate professor and Concordia University Research Chair in Art History at Concordia University in Montreal. Major works include *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (2001) and *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (2007), as well as an edited collection, *Image & Imagination* (2005), all from McGill-Queen's University Press. An active independent curator, she was artistic director of the international biennale, *Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal 2005*.

Sherry Farrell Racette (Timiskaming First Nation) is an interdisciplinary scholar, an illustrator of children's books, a painter and multi-media artist whose work combines traditional and contemporary media. Her scholarly and artistic work has increasingly merged, with divergent outcomes from the same body of research. Recent essays include “Haunted: Images of First Nations Children in Residential School Photography,” and “Looking for Stories and Unbroken Threads: Museum Artifacts as Women's History and Cultural Legacy.”